
4.3 Microblogs (e.g. Twitter)

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Synopsis: Social media guidelines for microblogs for State of Georgia agencies.

4.3.0 Introduction

Microblogging refers to a form of blogging that allows users to post very brief text updates, similar in size to an SMS text message. Twitter and Tumblr are both considered microblogs. Users can subscribe to updates from individuals and entities they are interested in, or search for posts by keyword. Account members can also send messages directly to other members as a form of short, public conversation.

4.3.1 Benefits of Microblogs

- Starts a conversation
- Allows you to broadcast messages: news, announcements, emergency notifications
- Allows you to seek input from the public - i.e. Crowdsourcing
- Helps your agency remain transparent
- Helps with agency recruiting efforts

4.3.2 Policies and Tips for Microblogging

- Set a plan for the "voice" of your microblog. You should use plain language and avoid agency jargon.
- Establish a point person in charge of posting to the microblog, and be sure this person is aware of your social media policies.
- Determine whether you would like to use a third-party service, (such as HootSuite or TweetDeck), to schedule your content and monitor your conversations.
- Think before you tweet.
- Check your facts before posting.
- Develop a policy on retweeting - your agency should only retweet posts from appropriate sources.
- Make a list of partner hashtags, and use those hashtags to engage in conversations.
- Use trending topics and hashtags carefully. If you decide to post about a trending crisis (e.g. a school shooting), you'll want to be both relevant and sensitive.
- During times of crisis, you may want to stop publishing scheduled posts for your microblogs. If you choose to continue scheduled posts, make sure they are appropriate for the situation.
- Select a point person to monitor replies and direct contacts, and respond when appropriate.
- If your website has RSS feeds (such as feeds for press releases or blog posts), consider the pros and cons of using a tool that automatically posts those to your microblog.
 - Beware of the "noise" factor - if you're automatically posting everything from an RSS feed,

individual and more personal posts may get overlooked.

- Consult your agency to determine if you need to keep records of posts for records retention purposes. If so, you will need to set up a tool that can automate records retention. ([TwInbox](#) [1] is one option).

4.3.3 Security Considerations

Twitter and other microblogs are popular with spammers and hackers, so it is important to take precautions to avoid having your account hacked.

- Use a very strong password for your account, and change it often. The State of Georgia [Password Security standards \(PDF\)](#) [2] recommend that you change your passwords every 45 days. Particularly, make sure to change your password when an employee or intern who had access to the account leaves.
- Consider adding two-step login verification to further protect your account.
- Don't click on another user's short URL unless they have given it fair context and you trust their source.
- Don't retweet a shortened URL unless you have verified the link. One resource for verifying a shortened URL is [untiny.me](#) [3].

4.3.4 Authentication for Microblogs

- Link to your .gov site from your microblog profile.
- Link to your microblog from your .gov website.
- Use your official logo or trademark as your profile photo.
- Claim authenticity in your profile.

4.3.5 Examples

- [GBI Amber Alerts on Twitter](#) [4]
- [Georgia Lottery on Twitter](#) [5]
- [Georgia Forestry Commission on Twitter](#) [6]
- [Georgia Department of Labor on Twitter](#) [7]

4.3.6 Glossary

- **tweet:** (noun) a 140-character microblog post on Twitter. (verb) to post to Twitter.
- **handle:** (noun) the account name; you can reference these to start conversations with others.
- **hashtag:** (noun) a keyword or term placed behind a hash mark # to help organize conversations; use these to follow discussions on particular topics. Example: #teamga for Team Georgia posts.
- **retweet:** (noun) a reposting of another user's tweet. (verb) the act of reposting another user's tweet.

4.3.6 Resources

- DigitalGov's [Twitter Best Practices for Government](#) [8]
- [Twitter's Rules and Best Practices](#) [9]
- [Twitter's Government and Elections Handbook](#) [10]
- [All Twitter on Social Media Image Sizes](#) [11]